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COMMUNIQUÉ ON THE WORKING VISIT OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION TO ALGERIA, 10-12 MARCH 2018

Addis Ababa, 12 March 2018: The Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, undertook a working visit to Algeria from 10 to 12 March 2018. He was accompanied by the Commissioners for Peace and Security and for Human Resources, Science and Technology, Smaïl Chergui and Sarah Anyang Agbor, respectively; the High Representative of the African Union for Mali and the Sahel, Pierre Buyoya; the Executive Secretary of the Planning and Coordinating Agency of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), Ibrahim Mayaki; and by other officials of the African Union Commission.

During his stay, the Chairperson of the Commission met with the Foreign Minister of Algeria, Abdlekader Messahel, accompanied by his staff. They had a long working session covering different continental priorities related to peace and security, African integration, migration, education and culture, as well as the institutional reform of the African Union, within the larger framework of Agenda 2063.

The Chairperson of the Commission was also received by Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia, with whom he had fruitful exchanges of views on a number of issues of common interest, in particular integration and economic development, peace and security, and the institutional reform of the African Union.

During the discussions, the Chairperson of the Commission reiterated the appreciation of the African Union to the Algerian authorities, in particular President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, for their constant and strong commitment to the causes of the continent. He stressed the need to sustain and enhance this commitment in the current juncture marked by efforts to deepen of integration and intensify peace efforts, in order to attain the objective of a conflict-free Africa by 2020.

The Chairperson of the Commission and his Algerian hosts reiterated the need to spare no efforts to ensure the success of the Kigali Extraordinary Summit of 21 March 2018 on the African Continental Free Trade Area. The Chairperson of the Commission pointed out that, the Commission would take the opportunity to submit, for signature by the Member States, the Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons and the African Passport, adopted

by the Assembly of the Union in January 2018 in Addis Ababa, with the understanding that, in the implementation process of this instrument, specific constraints that countries might face should be taken into account.

The Chairperson of the Commission urged Algeria to join the Single African Air Transport Market, launched at the January 2018 Summit and to which 24 Member States are already parties. The Single Air Market would increase air links between African countries and reduce their costs, thereby promoting trade, investment and tourism. Its materialisation would strengthen African airlines and put them in a better position to face competition from non-African operators.

The Chairperson welcomed the significant progress made in the execution of the regional infrastructure projects under NEPAD, especially the Trans-Saharan highway linking Algiers to Lagos, Nigeria, with a total length of 4,500 kilometres, of which 225 kilometres in Niger remain to be tarred (the financing of this section has just been concluded); the fiber optic link (4,500 kilometres) between Algeria, Niger, Nigeria and Chad, of which 2,700 kilometres in Algerian territory have been finalised; and the Trans-Saharan gas pipeline, approximately 4,200 kilometres long, between Algeria, Niger and Nigeria, which includes branches to other countries of the sub-region. The Chairperson of the Commission expressed the appreciation of the African Union to Algeria for its commitment, including in terms of financing, to these projects, which aim at establishing a development corridor, by opening up the sub-region and promoting trade.

The Chairperson of the Commission and the Algerian officials also exchanged views on the revival of the building of a united Maghreb. The Chairperson of the Commission stressed that the integration project of the African Union is based on the Regional Economic Communities; hence, the importance of revitalising the Arab Maghreb Union. Algeria reiterated its commitment to the Maghreb integration process and its readiness to contribute to its conclusion.

With regard to peace and security issues, the discussions focused on a number of situations. On Western Sahara, the Chairperson of the Commission sought the views of Algeria, as a neighbouring country, on how best to implement the mandate entrusted to him by the Assembly of the Union. In this regard, and in consultation with the Chairperson of the Union, he is expected to submit a report on the modalities of the African Union contribution to the search for a solution, within the framework of the relevant decisions and resolutions of the African Union and the United Nations Security Council.

On Mali, the Chairperson of the Commission thanked Algeria for its decisive role as the Chef de File of the Mediation and Chair of the Follow-up Committee of the Agreement for

Peace and Reconciliation arising from the Algiers Process. The need for the continued involvement of Algeria and the African Union, in support of the completion of the implementation of the Agreement, was underscored. At the same time, it is important for the Malian parties to take full ownership of the Agreement and its implementation, given their primary role in this respect.

With respect to Libya, the Chairperson of the Commission and his Algerian hosts expressed their deep concern and stressed the need for close coordination of efforts, it being understood that any process should be fully owned by the Libyans. The Chairperson of the Commission informed his interlocutors of the convening in Addis Ababa, in mid-April 2018, of a ministerial meeting of the High-Level Committee of the African Union on Libya.

Concerning the fight against terrorism, the Chairperson of the Commission expressed the appreciation of the African Union to Algeria for its remarkable contribution to the fight against this scourge, adding that Africa had much to learn from the Algerian experience and highlighting the role of Champion entrusted to President Abdelaziz Bouteflika. He welcomed the organisation, early April, in Algiers, of a Joint High-level African Union-Algeria meeting on the fight against the financing of terrorism in Africa, pursuant to the relevant provisions of the communiqué of the 455th meeting of the Peace and Security Council, held in Nairobi, in September 2014.

Within the specific framework of the efforts in the Sahel, the discussions highlighted the need to revive the Nouakchott Process on Enhancing Security Cooperation in the Sahelo-Saharan Region and ensure an effective coordination between the various initiatives underway in the Sahel region (Joint Operational Staff Committee - CEMOC, G5 Sahel Joint Force, Fusion and Liaison Unit - UFL and Multinational Joint Task Force mandated to fight the Boko Haram terrorist group – MNJTF). The Chairperson of the Commission thanked Algeria for the humble and discreet support it provides to the countries of the region. He informed his hosts of the convening in Nouakchott, at the end of this month, at the initiative of the African Union, of a meeting on the Sahel, to promote greater synergy among the various ongoing initiatives in the region.

The Chairperson of the Commission exchanged views with his hosts on the conflict in South Sudan and ways and means of strengthening the support of the African Union to the commendable efforts of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), including through the reactivation of the High-Level ad hoc Committee on South Sudan, of which Algeria is a member.

The issue of the institutional reform of the Union was also discussed. Algeria reaffirmed its support for this process. In view of the need for an inclusive approach to ensure the success of this endeavour, the Chairperson of the Commission and the Algerian officials stressed the importance of the decisions taken at the Addis Ababa Summit, in January 2018, on the involvement of the Bureau of the Assembly of the Union and the establishment of a Committee of 15 Ministers of Foreign Affairs to play an advisory role in support of the reform process.

The Chairperson of the Commission travelled to Tlemcen to visit the Institute of Water and Energy Sciences of the Pan-African University. He was accompanied, during this visit, by the Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology. Minister Messahel and the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Tahar Hadjar, also participated in the visit. The Institute, which is one of the four already operational branches of the Pan-African University, offers Masters and PhD programmes. For the 2016-2017 academic year, 128 students of different African nationalities were enrolled in the Masters programme, and 48 had graduated.

The Chairperson of the Commission also visited the headquarters of the African Union Police Cooperation Mechanism - AFRIPOL. He was received by the Chairman of the AFRIPOL General Assembly and Director of the Algerian National Security, General Abdelghani Hamel. Since its establishment, AFRIPOL has undertaken a number of activities, particularly the establishment of the Africa Police Information and Communication System (AFSECOM), to facilitate exchange of information among Member States - 34 of them have appointed Liaison Officers, as well as the implementation of training programmes focusing on transnational organised crime and cybercrime.

Similarly, the Chairperson of the Commission visited the headquarters of the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism - ACSRT. On this occasion, he stressed the importance of the ACSRT mandate, against the backdrop of the worsening of the scourge of terrorism, as demonstrated by the recent attacks in Ouagadougou. The efforts of the ACSRT are focused on assessing the capacity and needs of the Member States and providing them assistance, including in terms of capacity building, exchange of information, and intelligence and research.

Finally, the Chairperson of the Commission visited the headquarters of the African Energy Commission, established in 2008. He was informed about the activities of this structure, which compiled data and statistics, as part of the Africa Energy Information System, and provide capacity building support to Member States.

The Chairperson of the Commission expressed the gratitude of the African Union to the Algerian authorities for the decisive support they extend to these various African Union institutions. He also marked his appreciation of the important support that Germany, through the GiZ, provides to the Tlemcen Institute. The African Union and the relevant Algerian authorities would work together to resolve the pending legal and administrative issues related to the functioning of those different structures.

Furthermore, the Chairperson of the Commission expressed his thanks to the Algerian authorities for their efforts to set up the Grand Museum of Africa, whose establishment was proposed at the 2nd session of the Conference of African Union Ministers of Culture held in Algiers, in October 2008, and subsequently endorsed by the Executive Council. The Grand Museum of Africa is one of the flagship projects of the First Ten-Year Implementation Plan of Agenda 2063. A meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee, set up by the Executive Council, is scheduled soon in Algiers, to develop a roadmap for the implementation of the project.

*For more information, please contact Ms. Ebba Kalondo,
Spokesperson of the Chairperson of the Commission,
E-mail: KalondoE@africa-union.org*